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SUBJECT: FORMER BURUNDI NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LEADER SPREADS
BLAME FOR POLITICAL IMPASSE

¶1. (SBU) In a meeting with the embassy on August 7, National Council for the Defense of Democracy - Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party member and former First Vice President of the National Assembly Onesime Nduwimana summed up his perceptions of Burundi's political morass by stating that the key players are only acting in their interests for the next round of elections in 2010. Nduwimana characterized the stalemate as primarily a constitutional tug-of-war within Burundi President Pierre Nkurunziza's government and described the National Assembly as the battlefield. Nduwimana, the former Minister of Communications during Burundi's transitional period, claimed that each political party is interpreting Burundi's constitution as meets their political interests. In particular, Nduwimana referred to the constitutional clause that affords the right of political parties to participate in the government, if they desire, provided they've received five percent of the vote in the 2005 elections.

¶2. (SBU) Nduwimana, the CEO of a Burundian insurance company, further elaborated on the political quagmire by explaining that the major opposition parties, the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) and Union for National Progress (UPRONA), are exploiting a perceived split in the ruling CNDD-FDD party and its inability to form a majority voting block in the National Assembly to pass legislation. On the contrary, stated Nduwimana, the CNDD-FDD party is only 15 members short of the necessary two-thirds majority but has the support of other party members of the National Assembly. Nduwimana strengthened his argument by claiming that the members of FRODEBU are split in their allegiance to the own party and to the CNDD-FDD.

¶3. (SBU) Nduwimana, who does not consider himself to be a key player in CNDD-FDD party politics, expressed that he did not think dialogue alone would be sufficient to stem the political instability. He emphasized that President Nkurunziza also needs to take substantive action to avoid further blockage of political and economic progress. But Nduwimana, parroting a sentiment expressed to the embassy by others, suggested that President Nkurunziza is being counseled by 'unknown' advisors which may be preventing the President from addressing the political impasse. When asked for specific names, Nduwimana did not offer a response; however, as did other embassy visitors, Nduwimana hinted that the advisors may be associated with the military wing of the CNDD-FDD party. He asserted that these advisors are barriers between Nkurunziza and anyone who is able to provide an 'educated' viewpoint of the political situation.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Nduwimana, who is among the most

influential civilian members of the CNDD-FDD party, offered a balanced and objective perspective of the political tangle, portioning blame to both his own party's government and the opposition factions. In that respect, Nduwimana has the potential to be an objective voice in persuading Nkurunziza to become more pro-active in alleviating the political stalemate threatening the stability of the nation. Instead, Nduwimana, a former high-ranking member of National Assembly and now a successful business man, is clearly hesitant to use his prestige to influence party politics or to personally offer a strategy for progress to President Nkurunziza. Unfortunately, while Nkurunziza's attention is being dominated by his military advisors, it will be difficult to identify objective individuals who are genuinely concerned for the welfare of Burundi's people and still able to bend the President's ear. End Comment.

MOLLER